

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEL AV 06517 01 OF 02 311746Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----002448 311749Z /41

O P 311625Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8040
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 6517

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, MILI, PBOR, IS, LE
SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON- INITIAL ISRAELI RESPONSE TO BOUTROS PLAN

REF: (A) STATE 206396; (B) BEIRUT 4204; (C) BEIRUT 4240;
(D) TEL AVIV 6402

1. I MET WITH DAYAN AT 1730 HOURS AUGUST 30 TO DISCUSS
SEVERAL SUBJECTS (SEE SEPTELS), PRINCIPAL ONE BEING TO
CONVEY THE LATEST INFORMATION PROVIDED BY BOUTROS
REGARDING EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THE SOUTH LEBANON SITUATION.
MFA DIRGEN EVRON, DAYAN'S SPECIAL ASSISTANT ELY
RUBENSTEIN, AND DCM VIETS WERE ALSO PRESENT.

2. I OPENED THIS SEGMENT OF OUR CONVERSATION BY STATING
WE WERE ANXIOUS TO KEEP ISRAEL INFORMED ABOUT WHAT WE
REGARDED WERE SOME PRINCIPALLY PROMISING DEVELOPMENTS
IN THE SOUTH LEBANON SITUATION. I STRESSED
THAT THE IMMEDIATE PERIOD AHEAD CALLED FOR THE
UTMOST IN RESTRAINT AND PATIENCE OF ALL PARTIES CON-
CERNED AS EFFORTS CONTINUED TO FIND MEANS TO IMPLEMENT
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THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT. THE LEBANESE HAD ASKED FOR OUR
REACTIONS TO THE CURRENT STATE OF NEGOTIATIONS AND HAD
SPECIFICALLY ASKED THAT WE RELAY THEM OF THESE
DEVELOPMENTS TO THE ISRAELIS. I THEN PROCEEDED CARE-
FULLY AND SLOWLY TO BRIEF DAYAN ON THE PERTINENT
SECTIONS OF REFTELS A, B AND C. I CONCLUDED BY NOTING
AGAIN THAT ALTHOUGH NO ONE COULD GUARANTEE THAT PLAN

WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED EXACTLY AS DESCRIBED, WE THOUGHT THIS PLAN REPRESENTED A CONSIDERABLE ADVANCE BY BOTH THE LEBANESE AND PALESTINIANS TOWARD THE RESOLUTION OF A VERY DELICAT AND DANGEROUS SITUATION. IT WAS OUR ESTIMATE THAT BOUTROS WOULD NOT HAVE CONVEYED THESE DETAILS TO US IF HE DID NOT THINK AN AGREEMENT WAS NEAR AT HAND.

3. DAYAN'S FIRST RESPONSE WAS TO ASK "IS THERE ANY-THING YOU WANT US TO DO OR NOT TO DO RIGHT NOW WHICH IS CAUSING PROBLEMS?" I TOLD HIM BOUTROS HAD NOT SPECIFIED ANY COMPLAINTS AGAINST ISRAEL IN HIS CON-VERSATION WITH OUR AMBASSADOR, BUT HE HAD MADE IT CLEAR HE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN ISRAELI REACTIONS TO THESE DEVELOPMENTS. I ADDED THAT FOR OUR PART WE COULD ONLY HOPE THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD CONTINUE TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT.

4. IN RESPONSE DAYAN MADE THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS. FIRST, HE THOUGHT WE SHOULD ALL WAIT AND SEE HOW THINGS TURN OUT. IT WAS ONE THING TO HAVE AN AGREE-MENT AND QUITE ANOTHER TO OBSERVE HOW IT IS ACTUALLY IMPLEMENTED ON THE GROUND. FROM WHAT I HAD TOLD HIM HE DIDN'T THINK IT WAS A GOOD AGREEMENT, "BUT I'M NOT SURE IT REALLY MATTERS." WHAT DID CONCERN HIM WAS THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF ARMED PALESTINIANS SOUTH OF THE
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LITANI, ASIDE FROM THOSE IN REFUGEE CAMPS NEAR TYRE. (HE NOTED THAT THE ARQUB IS EAST, NOT SOUGH OF THE LITANI - AND SEEMED LESS CONCERNED ABOUT THAT REGION THAN I HAD EXPECTED.) I BROKE IN TO SAY I DIDN'T THINK THERE WAS ANY REALISTIC CHANCE OF THE LEBANESE BEING ABLE TO MOVE NORTH ANY OF THE CAMPS AROUND TYRE. DAYAN REPLIED THIS WAS TOO BAD. EVEN SUPPOSING THESE CAMPS ONLY CONTAINED REFUGEES HE WOULD PREFER TO SEE THEM MOVED FARTHER NORTH. THEY WERE "TOO CLOSE." HOWEVER, HE SEEMED PREPARED TO ADMIT TACITLY THAT THE TYRE CAMP COULD NOT BE MOVED. HE THOUGHT ALL PALESTINIANS SHOULD BE MOVED NORTH OF THE LITANI EXCEPT FOR THOSE LEFT IN THE TYRE CAMP IN A PURELY REFUGEE OR "NON-SOLDIERING CAPACITY." I REMINDED HIM THAT UNDER BOUTROS' PLAN THERE WOULD BE LEFT A RESIDUAL FORCE OF ONLY A COUPLE OF HUNDRED ARMED PALESTINIANS IN THE CENTRAL AREA, AND I AGAIN STRESSED NONE OF THEM WOULD BE CLOSER THAN TEN KILOMETERS FROM THE

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FRONTIER. DAYAN RESPONDED THAT EVEN SO, IF THE
PALESTINIANS WERE TO HOLD CHECK POSTS THIS MEANT IN
FACT THEY WOULD RULE THE AREA BY INTERDICTING ROAD TRAFFIC.

5. I RECALLED THAT BEGIN HAD SAID THERE WERE NOW
5,000 PALESTINIANS SOUTH OF THE LITANI. WHETHER THE
NUMBER IN FACT WAS 3, OR 4 OR 5,000 MEN, THE FACT
WAS THAT BOUTROS' PLAN LIMITING THE ARMED PALESTINIAN
FORCE TO ONLY A COUPLE OF HUNDRED SEEMED TO US TO
REPRESENT AN ENORMOUS POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENT IN THE
SITUATION. DAYAN ANSWERED THAT SO LONG AS THERE WERE
ARMED PALESTINIANS SOUTH OF THE LITANI HE WOULD BE
CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT THEY WERE DOING. IF THEY WERE NOT
CONTROLLING THE AREA, WHY WERE THEY THERE? THESE
WERE HIS REACTIONS. HE WAS NOT AN EXPERT ON SOUTH
LEBANON, "IT WAS NOT HIS RESPONSIBILITY." WE
SHOULD DISCUSS IT FURTHER WITH MINISTER OF DEFENSE
WEIZMAN, WHO MIGHT HAVE OTHER REACTIONS. I SAID I
ALREADY HAD AN APPOINTMENT WITH HIM ON SEPTEMBER 1 AND
WOULD DO SO.

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6. SUMMING UP, DAYAN OBSERVED THAT AT LEAST NO ONE
WAS COMPLAINING ABOUT WHAT ISRAEL WAS DOING AND THIS
WAS GOOD NEWS. WHEN I SAID THAT THERE HAS INDEED

BEEN A LOT OF COMPLAINTS ABOUT ISRAELI ACTION, HE
WRYLY AMENDED HIS COMMENT TO SAY THAT AT LEAST NO ONE
IS BITTERLY COMPLAINING OR SCREAMING. SECONDLY, HE
PREFERRED TO WAIT AND SEE WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN.
IF ASKED WHETHER ISRAEL LIKED THE AGREEMENT, THE
ANSWER WOULD BE NO. THIRDLY, WE SHOULD REMEMBER THAT
ISRAEL WOULD NOT BE INVOLVED IN SOUTH LEBANON IF THE
POPULATION DIDN'T WANT IT THERE. FOURTHLY, THERE WAS
THE MATTER OF DEFENDING ISRAEL'S NORTHERN FRONTIERS
"AND WE WILL NOT ACCEPT PALESTINIANS CLOSE TO OUR
BORDERS." DAYAN THEN ASKED IF THE GOOD FENCE HAD BEEN
MENTIONED BY BOUTROS. I SAID NO. DAYAN ENDED THIS
PORTION OF THE CONVERSATION WITH AN ELLIPTICAL COMMENT
TO THE EFFECT THAT A COUPLE OF HUNDRED PALESTINIANS
COULD DO MORE DAMAGE IN PEACE TIME BY DISRUPTING THE
SITUATION THAN THOUSANDS WCOULD IN A WAR.

7. COMMENT: I AM MILDLY ENCOURAGED BY DAYAN'S LOW-
KEY RESPONSE. I'M NOT CONVINCED THAT BECAUSE SOUTHERN
LEBANON DOES NOT COME UNDER HIS WING THAT THIS IN-
HIBITED HIM FROM SPEAKING OUT IN STRONGER TERMS. IF
HE FELT A TOUGHER REACTION WERE MERITED, I AM CERTAIN
HE WOULD HAVE GIVEN IT TO ME. WEIZMAN IS LIKELY TO BE
TOUGHER ON THIS ONE, BUT PERHAPS DAYAN WILL PREVAIL
WITH HIS ATTITUDE OF WAIT AND SEE. OBVIOUSLY I DID
NOT OBTAIN DIRECT ANSWERS TO ALL OF BOUTROS'
QUESTIONS, BUT I DID NOT PRESS FOR THEM IN LIGHT OF
PARA 1 OF STATE 206396.
LEWIS

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